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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9073
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0099
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 3048
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0195
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0513
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 2505
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 6995
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 000367

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2019
TAGS: PGOV TW
SUBJECT: KMT WINS BY-ELECTION IN TAIPEI BUT WITH
SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

REF: TAIPEI 289

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The ruling KMT's Chiang Nai-hsin won the March 28 legislative by-election in Taipei's Da'an District by a relatively slim 10 percentage margin over the DPP's Chou Po-ya. KMT leaders welcomed the victory but promised to reflect over the party's substandard performance in one of the Bluest districts in Taiwan. The relatively narrow margin of victory and low voter turnout (under 40 percent) appear to reflect public apathy toward politics and disappointment with the ruling KMT's performance. The opposition DPP publicly lauded Chou Po-ya's success in improving the party's showing in Da'an District (39 percent, up from 32 percent), but a DPP contact privately told AIT that Chou could have done even better with a harder hitting campaign. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The KMT's Chiang Nai-shin took 49 percent of the vote to win the Da'an District by-election on March 28, compared to 39 percent for the DPP's Chou Po-ya and 10 percent for independent Yao Li-ming, who was endorsed by the pan-Blue New Party. Chiang will fill the seat that Diane Lee (KMT) vacated as a result of her citizenship controversy. Voter turnout was a disappointing 39 percent, apparently a reflection of public apathy toward the election and candidates and disappointment with politics. The economic downturn, disappointment with the KMT administration's performance, and cool weather with occasional drizzles may also have been contributing factors to the poor turnout.

¶3. (SBU) Chiang's victory on Saturday fell short of the usual standards for the Blue-dominated "iron vote" Da'an District. Chiang's 46,065 votes were 53,229 fewer than the 99,294 votes won by Diane Lee in the January 2008 Legislative Yuan election. Political commentators here underscored that the "narrow margin" of Chiang's victory was a warning to the KMT that the public dissatisfied with the KMT's performance since returning to power last year. KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung and Presidential Office Spokesman Wang Yu-chi acknowledged the KMT needed to do some "soul-searching" and "listen to the people."

¶4. (C) DPP Chair Tsai Ing-wen lauded Chou's good showing (39 percent versus 32 percent for the DPP's Luo Wen-jia in January 2008) as an encouraging sign for the party. However, DPP Central Standing Committee member Tuan I-kang told AIT

that Chou Po-ya could have even better if his campaign had focused on the KMT's prolonged failure to deal with the Diane Lee citizenship issue. The DPP's turnout rate was also depressed, though less so than the KMT, with the DPP garnering 11,775 fewer votes than it did in the 2008 LY election in Da'an District.

Comment

¶5. (C) Back-to-back substandard performances by the KMT in the by-elections in Miaoli (March 14) and Taipei could spell some difficulties for the ruling party heading into the December city and county elections. This may give a slight boost to the morale of the DPP, which, however, has its own set of problems stemming from former President Chen Shui-bian's corruption cases and his continued meddling in DPP politics.

YOUNG